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OSD FOR ASD VERSHBOW FROM AMBASSADOR JEFFREY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER: YOUR VISIT TO TURKEY

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) Sandy, Glad you'll be able to visit Turkey at this key time. Your short visit will give you an opportunity to engage with key Turkish leaders on, first and foremost in their minds, missile defense. The Turks are keen to learn more about U.S. plans, in particular what role the U.S. wants/expects Turkey and others in Europe to play. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) will be interested in our ideas for HLDG reform, even if they may be slow to accept them.

12. (S) You know how broad our agenda is with Turkey. As you will have a short time in country, I suggest you focus on a few key issues.

Be sure to raise:

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- Missile Defense, with emphasis on how the U.S. will look to several Allies - not just Turkey - for help (para 3)
- Repeat our commitment to our intel and other support for strikes against the PKK (para 5-6)
- Appreciation for Turkey's efforts on Afghanistan/Pakistan (para 13)
- Float the idea of HLDG reform and ensure Guner knows we expect him in Washington (para 4)
- Press for a realistic assessment of Turkey's view of the threat assessment from Iran (para 10)

Watch Out For:

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- Pressure for direct U.S. milops against the PKK (paras 11-12)
- Conflation of Turkey's exploration of air defense capabilities with our Missile Defense needs (para 3)

Missile Defense

13. (S) The Turks will appreciate your update on U.S. missile defense plans and in particular will expect you to have specific ideas on how Turkey would contribute to the PAA. While the top-level bureaucrats with whom you will meet will understand the rationale for the PAA and will be ready to explore ways Turkey can help, the political environment for a request to base assets in Turkey is mixed, and Turkey's perception of the Iranian threat to its territory differs from ours. The GOT continues to tread a fine line in managing its strong relationship with the U.S. and its ties with both the Islamic world and Russia. The government must be able to demonstrate that any missile defense program is not specifically anti-Iran, nor blatantly pro-Israel.

14. (S) Likewise, it will want to ensure that Russia is not opposed to Turkey's role. Also important will be clarity on the degree to which this system is a NATO one, under NATO

Command and Control (C2). The PAA would presumably complement Turkey's effort to establish a domestic missile defense capability that would protect Turkey's major population centers. The PAC-3 has been offered in response to Turkey's air defense tender and you should highlight the system's ability to be interoperable with any future NATO command and control architecture.

HLDG

15. (C) You will need to outline U.S. views to streamline and alter the current HLDG format to make it into a more substantive discussion. The Turks are shy to stray from the status quo; you should emphasize why we feel this change is necessary while underscoring that it is vitally important the DCHOD Guner attend the upcoming HLDG in December, when decisions about future dialogues will be agreed upon. (We have learned that the new position of TGS number three, a four-star slot held by General Balanli (with a focus on hardware), might get the nod for the HLDG representative. We've told Guner it should be his.) You should also be prepared for the Turkish General Staff to raise the Shared Defense Vision document, as they await a response to their latest proposed text.

PKK

16. (C) Turkey's counter-terrorist efforts against the PKK have evolved in the past year and have expanded beyond military action alone. Although the government's Democratic (i.e., Kurdish) Initiative is not yet fully developed, the government has increased social and economic support to ethnic Kurds in southeast Turkey, has dramatically broadened the rights of Kurds to use their own language, and increased educational opportunities as well. It is our view that the TGS military success against the PKK, supported by our intelligence--sharing operation, has given the civilians the political space to explore this "opening." Turkish military operations against the PKK continue, however, and on October 6 Parliament extended the government's mandate to conduct cross-border operations against the PKK in Iraq for another year.

17. (C) Our 2007 decision to share operational intelligence was a turning point for the bilateral relationship, and President Obama's declaration before the Turkish Parliament of our continuing commitment to support Turkey's fight against the PKK was warmly welcomed. This cooperation has helped to improve our bilateral relationship across the board. Turkey's military leaders value this intelligence and the advice our military leaders give them. Our work has made it difficult for PKK terrorists to use northern Iraq as a safe haven. Turkish casualties are still occurring, however, and an increasing proportion are from IEDs. Due to pressure on Chief of Staff General Basbug and the Turkish General Staff (TGS) to "finish off" the PKK this year, the government wants and has requested direct U.S. kinetic action against the PKK; we have refused this request to date due to our own rules of engagement. The GOT has also requested the sale of armed MQ-9/Reaper UAVs, which will be a challenge to fulfill (see para 10).

Northern Iraq

18. (C) Turkey will not consider any alternative to the political unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, but has become more flexible on how it engages "the local authorities of northern Iraq" (how Turkey refers officially to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG)). Turkey's policy remains focused on the government in Baghdad, but its outreach to the KRG is expanding. This outreach is reinforced by the continued dominance of Turkish products and investments in the KRG's healthy economy. It is also tied to Turkey's new opening to its own Kurds, by far the biggest and most controversial domestic political issue here.

¶9. (S) The U.S.-Turkey-Iraq Tripartite Security talks continue regularly and a new Tripartite operational office in Erbil, established to share counter-PKK intelligence was established over the summer. The Turks remain shy to share data; they are not convinced that they can trust Iraqi/Kurdish individuals to keep information concerning operations secret. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction. Turkish military officials have become more strident in their calls for KRG officials to take action against the PKK.

U.S. Drawdown through Turkey

¶10. (S) Habur Gate and the Incirlik Cargo Hub -- vital to our sustainment operations -- could be helpful in our drawdown if other options prove too difficult. Minister of National Defense Vedci Gonul suggested to Secretary Gates in June that Turkey was ready to agree to the increased use of Incirlik for this purpose. Using the surface route from Habur Gate to Mediterranean ports (Iskenderun, Mersin) is also worth exploring, and we may be able to involve Turkish commercial shippers in support of the Northern Distribution Network. We caution that the rough terrain, security environment, and the cantankerous nature of the Turkish government bureaucracy will challenge any U.S. operation. Nevertheless, we are evaluating these options in cooperation with CENTCOM and EUCOM partners.

Iran

¶11. (C) Turkey understands and partially shares U.S. and international concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions, but is hesitant to use harsh language in public statements, in part due to its dependence on Iran as an energy supplier and as a trade route to Central Asian markets. PM Erdogan himself is a particularly vocal skeptic of the U.S. position. Turkey believes international pressure against Iran only helps to strengthen Ahmadinejad and the hard-liners. However, it continues to press Iran quietly to accept the P5 plus 1 offer. The GOT is a strong partner in our non-proliferation efforts, with several significant results. Politically, Turkey will try to position itself on Iran between wherever we are and where Russia is. In a pinch or if pressed, the Turks will slant to us.

UAVs and Attack Helicopters

¶12. (C) Turkey seeks to acquire, on an urgent basis, its own UAV capability. The administration has made clear at high levels that we support this goal, and Turkey has pending request to acquire armed Reaper UAVs. Ultimate approval for armed Reapers is complicated due to MTCR obligations and Hill concerns. However, even if those could be overcome, the delivery pipeline for these systems is long, and Turkey's leaders have sought reassurance that we will not pull our intelligence support until they can replace it. We have not made this commitment to date.

¶13. (C) Additionally, bad procurement decisions led Turkey to a severe shortage of attack helicopters, desperately needed for its fight against the PKK. Turkey has looked to us to help them bridge the capability gap, asking to purchase additional AH-1W Super Cobra aircraft. These aircraft are in short supply in our own inventory, but Secretary Gates and VCJCS Cartwright have promised to try to support with request within a few years (four each in 2011, 2012, and 2013). The Turks took this as an affirmative, and recently started pressing for delivery in 2010 instead of 2011.

Afghanistan/Pakistan

¶14. (C) Turkey has commanded ISAF twice since its inception

and will take command of RC-Capital this November. Turkey leads PRT Wardak and plans to open a second PRT in Jawzjan in early 2010. Turkey has sponsored the "Ankara Process" dialogue, one of several efforts to encourage constructive communications between Kabul and Islamabad and is a leading participant in the Friends of Democratic Pakistan. Turkey pledged significant aid to both countries: USD 200 million to Afghanistan and USD 100 million to Pakistan. Because of its culture, history and religious orientation, as well as Foreign Minister Davutoglu's strategic ambition, Turkey is well disposed to act as an agent of the international community's goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Constraining Turkey's potential is a lack of resources. Our conversations with Turkish interlocutors have helped us identify several areas in which Turkey can be of particular help: education and health, military training and support, economics, counter-narcotics, and trilateral engagement. (Note: Turkey will not support any CT operations in Afghanistan. They do not believe there is a NATO/ISAF mandate to engage in these operations, and they additionally have national caveats preventing them from participating in NATO/ISAF CT operations. The GOT also believes that ISAF should not/not be engaged in the counter-narcotics fight, believing that foreign fighters who engage in this fight just produces antipathy against foreign forces in the local population. I do, however, believe the GOT are willing to engage the training of Afghan security forces.)

Caucasus

15. (C) Turkey seeks to develop itself as a regional power and recognizes that the Caucasus region, stymied in its growth by frozen conflicts, could turn to Turkey for develop. The signing of the Protocol document in Zurich on October 10 was a landmark for the region, and should serve as a starting point for establishing bilateral relations and, ultimately, the opening of its closed border. Nevertheless, future relations will still be heavily linked to the 1915 "genocide" issue and the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Turkey consistently warns that any U.S. determination of the events of 1915 as "genocide" would set off a political firestorm in Turkey, and the devastating effect on our bilateral relationship -- including political, military, and commercial aspects -- would be unavoidable.

Political Environment

16. (C) PM Erdogan's Islamist-leaning Justice and Development (AK) Party is squarely in the driver's seat, but fears an erosion of its political base from more conservative/Islamist parties. Civilian-military relations remain complex. Chief of Staff General Basbug has worked out a modus vivendi with PM Erdogan, but the long-running struggle between Turkey's secularists (with the Army as its champion) and Islamists (represented by the government) naturally puts them at odds. Erdogan has the clear upper hand, a fact with which Basbug has seemingly learned to live. Alleged past military involvement in coup contingency planning or even deliberate generation of internal chaos remains political theme number one and preoccupies both Erdogan and Basbug and their respective underlings.

Israel

17. (C) While the Foreign Ministry and the Turkish General Staff agree with us that a strong Turkey-Israel relationship is essential for regional stability, PM Erdogan has sought to shore up his domestic right political flank at the expense of this relationship. His outburst at Davos was the first in a series of events the results of which we and his staff have sought to contain. The latest of these was Exercise Anatolian Eagle. Erdogan canceled Israel's participation

hours before the exercise was to begin. With an Israeli strike - across Turkish airspace - against targets in Iran a possibility, Erdogan decided he could not afford the political risk of being accused of training the forces which would carry out such a raid. Through some remarkable work with Allies and with the inter-agency, we engineered a public "postponement" of the international portion of the exercise, but the relationship has begun to sour.

JEFFREY

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